

Methodology

The goal of the CBO needs assessment was to increase understanding of the technical assistance and training needs of CBOs carrying out HIV prevention programs with diverse racial/ethnic populations. In addition, the project aimed to obtain a profile of these CBOs that NRMOS could use to improve the services they provide. Cross-population comparison in this assessment was neither possible nor appropriate, due to the diversity of the racial/ethnic populations targeted. The small number of agencies providing HIV prevention services to certain communities also made comparisons with other communities inappropriate.

It is important to note that the volatility of CBOs both demonstrated the great need for technical assistance and training and made the assessment more difficult. Frequently, CBOs close down or change their addresses, and the databases used to address the questionnaires had a lot of inaccurate information about the location of CBOs and the services they provide. This finding reinforces the need for technical assistance and training, which is often the crucial link in keeping CBOs up and running.

Data and Information Sources

Questionnaires

The model for the questionnaire was developed through a collaborative effort between the NRMOS involved in the assessment and the CDC. Each NRMOS submitted questions they wanted included in the questionnaire. Questions were removed to avoid repetition, and weekly conference calls were conducted between the CDC and NRMOS to discuss the instrument. An effort was made to come up with questions and responses that covered all the categories and would apply to the specific issues in HIV treatment and services with all populations. However, questions were deleted to keep the instrument to a size that would take less than an hour to fill out. Four different drafts of the questionnaire were rejected before the pilot version was developed.

The instrument was pilot tested with representatives from 12 different CBOs at a national CBO conference. A focus group was conducted with this same group after they filled out the questionnaire to get feedback on the form and content of the instrument. Further changes were made based on this feedback, and a final version of the questionnaire was developed.

Focus Groups

The NRMOS participating in the assessment conducted 43 focus groups with CBO representatives and staff members, members of CPGs, community leaders, and program consumers. An effort was made to conduct the focus groups throughout the country and U.S. territories with a cross-section of people able to contribute valuable information on technical assistance and training needs.

The focus groups concentrated on gathering information about HIV prevention services in the different areas and qualitative information on the seven key technical assistance and training areas. These data complement the survey, offering rich, descriptive information that is useful for developing a better understanding of the technical assistance and training needs of CBOs. Each NRMO developed the guidelines for its focus groups. The ITCA, in particular, incorporated cultural aspects into the focus groups. The techniques used were similar to those used in traditional talking circles.

Key Informant Interviews

In addition to questionnaires and focus groups, NCLR conducted key informant interviews with the executive directors of CBOs that hosted and organized their focus groups. These interviews sought in-depth information about needs for technical assistance and training in the area of organizational development, such as forming a board of directors, writing proposals, and finding funding sources. The interviews provided valuable information about an area that is especially important for many CBOs.

Geographic Information Systems

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) is a technology that allows both spatial and non-spatial data to be stored, analyzed, and viewed in a meaningful way. By creating maps, GIS illuminates geographic relationships between disparate data sets and allows insight into relationships that may be difficult to understand by looking at tables or graphs.

In this assessment, GIS was used to map the relationship between the geographic distribution of AIDS incidence and the location of CBOs providing HIV/AIDS services to racial and ethnic minority populations in the United States. GeoFields, Inc., was contracted to geocode data about the location of CBOs that were sent questionnaires and data about the location of CBOs that responded to the questionnaires they were sent. Geocoding means providing the data with a spatial reference point, for instance, attaching a latitude and longitude that allows the data to be mapped. GeoFields, Inc., and the Spatial Analysis and Information Dissemination Section of the Agency of Toxic Substance and Disease Registry used ArcView 3.1 software to map these locational data in conjunction with population data from the U.S. Census Bureau and Equifax and AIDS incidence data from the AIDS Public Information Dataset (AIDS PIDS), a subset of the CDC's HIV/AIDS Reporting System (HARS).